

to me very fully. She told me she would like to state her case more fully to Sir Edward Gibbes than she had done in an official memorandum, but at the same time she did not wish to have it on the file in the ordinary official way. I said to her, "Well, you always have an opportunity to mark your letter 'Confidential.'" That is what took place. I am sure there is absolutely nothing in that letter.

89. Acting on your suggestion, do you know whether Mrs. Branting did write such a letter to Sir Edward Gibbes?—Yes, she wrote a confidential letter.

90. Would that letter get on the file?—No.

91. Would you say that was acting as the Manager of the institution should act on a public matter?—It is a common enough thing for officers in the public service to write confidentially about matters.

92. But this was a matter in dispute between Mrs. Branting and Mrs. Bean, and, as I am instructed, this was your suggestion in order to get information before Sir Edward Gibbes?—I had the information myself, and I could have given it to him.

93. But that is not the point. You made a suggestion to Mrs. Branting by which she was to get certain information before Sir Edward Gibbes which would be confidential, and would not be put on the public file, and I want to know if you think that is a correct method of procedure?—It is a thing which is done in the public service.

94. But was it a fair suggestion to make in connection with such a matter as this?—Quite fair, and under similar circumstances I would do the same thing again. If you will accept my assurance, there was absolutely nothing in that letter which would suggest that Mrs. Branting tried to get behind Mrs. Bean.

95. Can you tell me whether there was any correspondence marked "Confidential" between Mrs. Branting and the Department in regard to Miss Howden?—Absolutely none.

96. Will you tell me whether the Matron ever asked for permission to cut hair before?—Yes. Permission had been refused by the Department as far back as 1901, again in 1905, and I think there was another case. The Department said "No, we will use that as a very last resource."

97. They rightly regarded it, as I think Sir Edward Gibbes put it, as an outrage?—Yes.

98. Do you remember what offence had been committed when Mrs. Branting applied for permission to cut hair before?—Absconding.

99. Then, at first the Department regarded hair-cutting as an outrage, but afterwards did not so regard it?—The position was grave, as you will see by the minute which has been quoted. It was thought to be an altogether unusual offence, and should be dealt with in an unusual way.

100. Will you tell me what record there was of A—— G——'s age?—The position was simply this: In accordance with the Department's practice we applied to the Registrar-General for the certificate of birth of A—— G——, and that was supplied to us, and by a strange coincidence that certificate was not of the same A—— G—— as we had here.

101. Was there another A—— G—— in any of your schools?—No; but she was born within a few months of the girl in the Home. As soon as Mrs. Bean gave me the facts that would enable me to make a further search I had that search made, and the matter was at once righted.

102. *The Commissioner.*] It was a pure accident?—Yes, an extraordinary coincidence.

103. *Mr. Salter.*] But could not the facts stated in the first certificate have been verified in some way?—No. I think, speaking from memory, we had neither the father's nor mother's names. The mistake occurred through the closeness of the date of birth, and living in the same locality.

104. But the fact remains that had it not been for Mrs. Bean's interference, as I may call it, this girl would have remained under the charge of the Department for nine months longer than she ought?—Yes; and an excellent thing too for her.

105. Then, Mrs. Bean stated that the Department has asked for no information about this girl for four months. Is it not your practice to keep an eye on the girls who go out to service? Can you explain how it is Mrs. Bean has never been asked to report, especially as you regarded her as such a bad girl?—The regulations are that the departmental visit has to be made once in six months.

106. Do you never ask for reports from the mistresses?—Yes; but this was altogether an unusual case, as you know.

107. Then there is the case of that girl L—— R——, or C—— C——: by whom was permission given to keep that girl beyond her twenty-first birthday?—No permission was given to keep her beyond her twenty-first birthday. The position was simply this: I know that girl very well indeed. She is a half-caste Chinese, and there was a grave danger of her going back to the Chinese life. Some two or three years ago the Matron had reported to the Department that the girl had such characteristics that she thought it would be an excellent thing if she could be dealt with after she was twenty-one years of age. However, a situation was found for the girl, and much to Mrs. Branting's surprise she was doing well in it. She reached twenty-one years of age, and Mrs. Branting, with a view to protecting the girl, asked me whether I would object to her having a wages agreement made out, not a license made out on the departmental form. She said that so far as she knew the girl did not know she was twenty-one, and that it would be a splendid thing for her if she could still be led to regard the Matron as her protector. I said, "If you think that will assist you in keeping the girl under your protection I will not object to your having an agreement made out." No license was ever signed.

108. You consented to a course which was irregular?—Yes; we have to sometimes sail a little bit close to the wind. I will state an instance. We had very recently to allow a Burnham boy to go loose on society. He is one of the vilest creatures we have ever had in one of our industrial schools. Taking advantage of a technicality, we have kept him as long as we could; but pressure has been brought to bear on us, and we have had to allow him to go. That means that this degene-